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UNPUBLISHED

The unpublished memorial of the Augustinian nuns of the convent of the Santi Quattro Coronati in Rome

VENERABLE CONVENT
OF THE SANTI QUATTRO CORONATI
Rome

[The last nine lines from 1942]

During the year no news of importance. We go ahead with the anxiety caused by the great war. Continuous frights because of nocturnal alarms. Lack of necessities. Bread, pasta, oil etc.

The Easter Station is nevertheless celebrated with the usual solemnity. The functions of Holy Week by means of the Irish students. Thus the solemnity of our sainted father Augustine, then of the Santi Quattro and we reach the year's closure blessing the Lord who has saved us from so many dangers, because of the appalling war, because of the privations and preoccupations of all kinds. The *Te Deum* was sung thanking God who has protected us.

Anno Domini 1943

With the traditional small function of the procession with the Holy Child, a pious practice that assures divine blessing for us, this year begins amid the horrors of the war, privations of all kinds, and the uncertainty of the outcome of the war itself.

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PROVIDENCE assists us, and enables us to face all the difficulties, through the work on sacred vestments and the washing of the church linen of the Pontifical Gregorian University, of the Pontifical Biblical Institute, of the Borromeo College, and other churches. Monsignor Respighi exerts himself as usual so that the liturgy of the Lenten station will be as solemn as always. The community can perform the spiritual exercises, and have the two sermons every week during Lent. So we approach Holy Week, and the functions of the Triduum take place. The Holy Sepulchre is visited by many faithful. We proceed with the same rhythm up until the solemnity of Saint Augustine which is celebrated with intense fervor. We approach the titular feastday of the Santi Quattro which is celebrated with pontifical vespers and the pontifical mass the morning of day 8, on which many read masses are celebrated.

Having arrived at this month of November we must be ready to render services of charity in a completely unexpected way. The Holy Father Pius XII, of paternal heart, feels in himself all the sufferings of the moment. Unfortunately with the Germans entry into Rome, which happened in the month of September, a ruthless war against the Jews has begun, whom they wish to exterminate by means of atrocities prompted by the blackest barbarities. They round up young Italians, political figures, in order to torture them and finish them off in the most tremendous torments. In this painful situation the Holy Father wants to save his children, also the Jews, and orders that hospitality be given in the convents to these persecuted, and that the cloisters must also adhere to the wish of the Supreme Pontiff, and, from the day of 4 November, we lodge the persons listed below up to the following 6 June:

from 4 November to 14, Mrs Bambas, wife of a political figure. The husband was hidden in another religious house and she wanted to reach him.

From 1 December to 27, all the Scazzocchio family of nine people.

From 1 December through all of the following February, the mother of Doctor Scazzocchio. These people were settled in the Chapter room, with the small room next to it, and the adjacent corridor. The meals are eaten in the refectory.

From 7 December to 23 January, Ravenna, Jewish (Rabbi) in the sacred vestments' room.

From 15 December to 18 January, Mr Viterbo with father-in-law, Jews, only to sleep.

Anno Domini 1944

From 1 January to 21, Mrs Dora, Jewish, - the small room of the reception hall.

From 5 January to 9 May, Mr Alfredo Sermoneta (Jewish) in the sacred vestments' room.

From 2 February to 7 May, Mr Salvatore Mastrofrancesco (politician) nephew of Sister Maria Veronica Del Signore.

From 2 February to 5 June, Mr Fernando Pisoli (politician) in the sacred vestments' room.

From 2 February to 9 May, Mr Fernando Talarico (drafted).

From 13 December to 6 June, the young Francesco Caracciolo.

From 15 December to 6 June, his brother Alberto, sons of General Caracciolo.

From 8 March to 7 May, Piero De Benedetti (patriot).

In the month of March, for eight days, Franco Talarico.

In the same period we hid a hundred tons of Fabriano's paper in the refectory and because of this suffered reprisals from the relatives of the proprietor.

In a large area next to the garden, we hid eleven automobiles, including that of General Badoglio, and of General Tessari, two trucks brought here by the military immediately after 8 September 1943.

A trailer truck, a motorbike belonging to Captain di Trapani, a tricycle, ten bicycles.

From the Gianni farm we hid seven mares, four cows, four oxen, all the agricultural machinery, and means of transport. The cloister, closed to visitors in order to allow the refugees to walk, was full of straw and hay. The furniture and linen of various evacuated families, objects of value and bank bonds.

6 June. Finally the doors are opened to these poor refugees and we remain again in our freedom but for a short time

of safe. Finally the doors are opened to these poor refugees, and we remain again in our freedom, but for a short time, because on the following 4 October we were ordered to lodge with the most scrupulous precaution General Carloni who was being hunted with a death warrant. We were ordered to lodge him by the Secretariat of State, imposing solemn secrecy on us. And he was accommodated as best as possible in the small room under the reception hall, but he was obliged to pass through the center of the community. Along with him was lodged his housekeeper because, suffering from a liver complaint, he needed to be careful about his food. The said lady cooked in our kitchen. The superiors were aware of this. It was hoped that this guest would also be freed in a few months. Unfortunately in the month of March following it was discovered that he was with us, and in a great hurry Monsignor Respighi along with Monsignor Centori took him by car to the Vatican to the Sacred Congregations in the house of Monsignor Carinci and he stayed there until 15 September, when we had to receive him again. And he was our guest for a good five years.

To all the above listed people, as well as lodging, board was also given, performing miracles for the moment we were going through, when everything was rationed. Providence always intervened. In the last months they gave us L.40... in this way we carried on the year. For Lent the Jews also came to hear the sermons, and Mr Alfredo Sermoneta helped in the church. The Mother Prioress, Sister Maria Benedetta Rossi, had him do many things for the altar of the Most Holy prepared for Holy Thursday, she hoped that his soul would be impressed by it. But unfortunately this holy satisfaction was not given us. We also had frights, especially one day when two agents of the SS, Special Service for tracking down Jews and young men, presented themselves. One of the two was Italian and the painful impression received was greater. However we didn't let ourselves be defeated neither by the threats nor the persuasions, and they went away.

At the end of the war, the goodness of the Holy Father was spoken about, who had helped and caused many to be saved, both Jews and young people and entire families. The press filled its columns and in a Catholic paper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, we read an article by Professor Tescari who knew well how much had been done in the cloistered convents for the salvation of so many persecuted.

Peaceful partisans

«Those who write the history of the most recent German Fascist oppression in Rome will have to devote a special chapter to the generous, vast, multiform work, deployed in favor of the persecuted by the religious. Parochial offices transformed into true and proper placement-refuge offices (I was in one where, in the few minutes I was there, I saw a multitude of men and women of every class, of every age, converge, and the parish priest listen, take notes, direct, promise, give generously), priests' homes become hotels for fugitives (I still hear the housekeeper of one of them grumbling that there wasn't anything in the house anymore etc.); complaints unusually peopled by faces shaped by new and strange confusion, but in this field of charity those who showed themselves real heroines, were the nuns who dressed up Jewish women (guilty of nothing else except being blood of Jesus and Mary) as fellow sisters, who violated the sacred cloister to shelter men persecuted for reason of politics or race, who took in children of fugitives, who gave themselves to the forging of personal documents getting them themselves or facilitating their acquisition, carrying out this grandiose and dangerous work with simplicity and courage and ineffable disinterest. The persecutors knew of it but they didn't dare violate the sacred precincts beyond a certain limit: the great shadow projected by Saint Peter's protected even the most remote and solitary places of refuge. O good and dear Sisters, may you be blessed along with the others by God, Who of the prize destined for you, has also given you here below a precious taste, allowing you to take part in so many marvellous conversions of people helped by you, who having felt that the substance of our religion is love, love without distinction, love without limits, did not resist the sweet invitation of grace and became again, or became, our brothers in faith also» (Onorato Tescari).

Remaining in our peace once again, the community life continues. Prayer and work. Since 1925 we worked for the Gammarelli firm makers of sacred vestments, later in the same year the Romanini firm asked that we sewed sacred vestments. From the time of the arrival of the Augustinian fellow sisters from Santa Prisca who washed the personal laundry of the fathers

From the time of the arrival of the Augustinians in 1575, the same place was used as the personal laundry of the fathers of the Society of Jesus in the Pontifical Gregorian University, we continued for some months, and then we left the personal laundry and gave it to the Sisters of the deaf and dumb, continuing to concern ourselves with the sacristy linen of the Pontifical University as well as that of the Pontifical Biblical Institute, later that of the Borromeo College and Sant' Andrea al Quirinale. We attended to the church of the Vittoria already for more than fifty years, and thus also with the Trappist fathers.

Normal life proceeds, the solemnity of our sainted father Augustine is celebrated with the customary functions. We reach the solemnity of the Santi Quattro without anything new, which Monsignor Respighi celebrates always in grand style. So we conclude this year also, so special in events, thanking the Lord for all the graces granted.

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